



# WHAT IS THE HOMESTEAD?

The Homestead is a not-for-profit organization that provides innovative solutions for people with autism.

Since 1994, The Homestead has supported hundreds of children and families in learning to deal with autism—no matter where they are on the mild to severe impact spectrum. The organization's programs work not only to help people with autism adapt to mainstream society, but also to help mainstream society better adapt to people with autism.

"We have one family who told us that in their small town they just couldn't do what others did on Sunday—go to church and then out for a meal with their entire family," Evelyn Horton, The Homestead's Director of Youth and Community Services, said. "After working with us for a few months in our Children's Autism Project, they were able to sit through their entire church service with all of their children and go out for lunch afterward."



*The things he has  
overcome and is  
able to do—it is  
just amazing.*

Sarah Muhs, mother of  
child with autism

**HH** The  
Homestead



# HOW DOES THE HOMESTEAD HELP PEOPLE WITH AUTISM?

First, The Homestead is one of only a handful of autism treatment centers in Iowa. An internet search for these types of services brings up diagnostic centers, tutors, support groups, even some magazines. Only a few true treatment facilities exist.

The Homestead is also one of the only autism treatment facilities in Iowa that utilizes Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) in aiding the development of young children with autism. In developing its Children's Autism Project (CAP), The Homestead explored evidence-based procedures that ensured best practices at other successful U.S. autism treatment organizations. Those utilizing ABA strategies had documented the most successful outcomes for those impacted by autism. The use of ABA is also the recommended autism treatment approach by the U.S. Surgeon General and American Academy of Pediatrics. The Homestead adopted ABA treatment through its new Children's Autism Project (CAP) almost two years ago.

The Children's Autism Project provides each child 12.5 hours of treatment per week, with each hour highly packed with engaging learning opportunities.



*We provide a clinic-based model where children can come and get intensive services. This is not a school. It helps children learn learning skills.*

Steve Muller, Executive Director of  
The Homestead





# WHAT IS AUTISM?

Autism is a developmental disability impacting how a person gathers and processes information. It causes a range of social, communication and behavioral challenges that affect educational performance as well as successful social interaction.

## A PERSON WITH AUTISM MIGHT:

- Not respond to his or her name by 12 months of age.
- Avoid eye contact and want to be alone.
- Have delayed speech and language skills (e.g., use words much later than siblings or peers).
- Repeat words or phrases over and over.
- Give unrelated answers to questions.
- Get upset by minor changes in routine (e.g., getting a new toothbrush).
- Not point at objects to show interest by 14 months of age (e.g., not point at an airplane flying over).
- Not play “pretend” games by 18 months of age (e.g., pretend to “feed” a doll).
- Have obsessive interests (e.g., get “stuck” on ideas).
- Flap his or her hands, rock his or her body, or spin in circles.
- Have unusual reactions to the way things sound, smell, taste, look, or feel.

Autism affects people differently. On a scale from severely to mildly affected, people are impacted at all levels. Autism can be a lifelong struggle. Many affected by autism can learn how to function in supervised or independent work, play and living situations. Learning how to appropriately interact with others is a key to their success.







# HOW IS AUTISM DIAGNOSED?

Diagnosing autism is difficult because there is no medical test that specifically points to the disability. Professionals can't do a blood work-up, put it under a microscope and see autism cells. To make a diagnosis, trained behavioral professionals—physicians, neurologists, speech/language specialists, psychologists and others—evaluate behavior and development levels while taking into consideration family input about the child's actions, reactions and day-to-day behavior.

Many children with autism are initially referred for a diagnostic evaluation if, by 18 months of age, they have not reached developmental benchmarks typical of their age group. If autism is diagnosed by age 2, and the child subsequently receives treatment and services, the child's outcomes can be better than if diagnosed later. The reason is simple—when children do not receive a final diagnosis until they are older, they may not receive the help they need during critical developmental periods.



The Homestead just wants them (the children) to have the best possible life.

Erin Enyart, mother of child with autism



If there had not been a Homestead he might be in an institution.

Amy Chebuhar, mother of child with autism

# HOW DOES AUTISM IMPACT A CHILD AND HIS FAMILY?

Behaviors caused by autism can completely disrupt the lives of not only the child living with it, but also the lives of her family members, teachers, classmates—anyone with whom she interacts.

Frequently, families of children living with autism give up, close the door, and become recluses within their own homes. Siblings don't invite friends home for a play date, parents don't socialize and the child dealing with autism doesn't get the chance to participate in his or her community. Divorce rates are high within families struggling with the effects of autism. Because dealing with a child with autism can be so consuming, their siblings often don't get all the time and attention their parents would like them to have.

The reasons are obvious and many: 1) parents don't have the time or energy to focus on their other children or each other after dealing with a child struggling with autism; 2) they don't know what that child may do that may disrupt what might seem a "normal, relaxing" social event, 3) and unfortunately, sometimes other children simply don't want to be around or play with the child who behaves differently.

But it doesn't have to be that way.



# WHAT IS APPLIED BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS?

Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) is based on the principles of behavior and applies these to improve important behaviors such as teaching a child to communicate, expanding play, and building meaningful social interactions.

ABA is: 1) intense, 2) highly structured and 3) again, based on human learning principles. Children with autism react positively to this type of structured learning situation which helps them build a foundation to be successful in school.

**Intense**—children spend 12.5 hours per week, one-on-one, with their ABA specialist. Each specialist has earned, at minimum, a four-year college degree and is trained in ABA teaching/learning strategies. The ABA specialist designs and provides a rapid rate of learning opportunities, while keeping the learning exciting and highly rewarding.

The specialists are supervised by Board Certified Behavior Analysts, accredited through the National Behavior Analyst Certification Board.

To maintain consistency, the Children's Autism Project provides weekly ABA training for parents and others living in the child's home. They are assisted in incorporating ABA strategies throughout daily life.



David has a wonderful quality of life. David is allowed to become all that he can be.

Bob Conroy, father of son with autism

The results are often remarkable and life changing. The Homestead's goal is simple: To help the individuals they serve live as full and vibrant a life as possible.

Sally Pederson, parent of Ronald who was diagnosed with autism at age 2, founding member of The Homestead and former Lieutenant Governor of Iowa.



# WHAT IS APPLIED BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS?

**Highly Structured**— The child and his specialist's time together is tightly-planned and goals are set for the child to work toward. Both successes and missteps are recorded daily, graphed and evaluated. The child progresses to new challenges as he consistently meets his existing goals.

**Based on Human-Learning Principles**—ABA is used throughout the world in classrooms and in many informal settings (like at home). For example, asking a child to clap his hands, demonstrating that movement and then praising the child for doing so, is a simplified example of ABA at work. A parent might achieve this outcome with a child who is five to eight months old.

A child affected with autism might learn this activity much later, but only after many highly reinforced learning opportunities.

For an ABA program to be effective, it requires the expertise of people who have been formally trained in ABA. The Homestead is unique among Iowa service providers with a cadre of behavior analysts to lead the programs.





# WHY EASTERN IOWA? WHY NOW?

Because the need is great.

- The U.S. Center for Disease Control estimates that 1 of every 88 children born in the U.S. is affected by a form of autism. This is a 600% increase in the past 20 years.
- More children will be diagnosed with autism this year than those with childhood cancer, juvenile diabetes and pediatric AIDS combined.
- Specifically, in Eastern Iowa:

## Number of Autism Diagnosed Students (2011-12 count)

Benton	29	Jones	26
Cedar	14	Linn	406
Iowa	20	Washington	21
Johnson	190	Total	706

\*\*Number of children ages 3-21 diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) per county. These numbers were reported by special education teachers in the districts within the counties listed. The count does NOT include any student displaying the characteristics of ASD without a formal diagnosis. Adding these students doubles the overall count.

The Linn Mar School District is very supportive of The Homestead coming to our community. We look forward to the collaborative partnership in expanding services for children and families impacted by The Homestead Children's Autism Project to the Cedar Rapids area!

Julie Jensen, Executive Director Student Services, Linn Mar Community Schools

The Homestead





# WHY EASTERN IOWA? WHY NOW?

- In Cedar Rapids, The Homestead's Children's Autism Project will provide Applied Behavioral Analysis learning strategies for children aged 3-8, the critical developmental stages when these children will benefit the most.
- The Homestead held informal information sessions publicized only by word-of-mouth in March 2012. More than twenty families were represented and signed The Homestead waiting list in anticipation of assistance for their child affected by autism.



The more we can work with children at that earlier age, the better. Autism is one of the few developmental disabilities where remarkable progress can be shown if you provide earlier types of intensive supports.

Steve Muller, Executive Director of  
The Homestead

Serving a child in a 24-hour community-based program costs the state of Iowa (taxpayers) \$320-\$600 per day, \$116,800-\$219,000 per year. Think of the incredible savings, but more importantly the value of a child growing and learning and becoming an active participant in his community.

Steve Muller, Executive Director of The Homestead

# ECONOMIC BENEFIT

Early intervention and opportunities to learn benefit not only the child and family impacted by autism, but the state's overall economy as well.

- The math is simple: after a child impacted with autism becomes an adult, he could be committed to a 24-hour community-based program that costs the state of Iowa (taxpayers) \$320-\$600 per day, or \$116,800-\$219,000 per year.
- ABA treatment through The Homestead's Children's Autism Project can help avoid this by helping those struggling with autism to learn to live and work in his community. Learning services provided through the Children's Autism Project are paid for by Medicaid, some insurance providers or private pay.
- Enabling a child to learn and become a productive member of his school and eventually, his community, often allows a stay-at-home parent to return to work. This benefits the family's economy, as well as the local community's and the state's.
- The Homestead will initially employ 10 to 12 full-time employees in its Children's Autism Project in Cedar Rapids. Additional services and staff will be added as needed.





# WHAT'S THE HOMESTEAD'S CURRENT PLAN?

In order to help more children and their families deal with autism, The Homestead will renovate an existing building to serve as a Children's Autism Project for children ages 3-8 in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. The clinic will open in the spring of 2013.

The Homestead is already building community partnerships with Eastern Iowa educators, not-for-profit and for-profit diagnostic and treatment service providers who work with children and families impacted by autism. These efforts have been met with encouragement and supportive responses.

To meet facilities, staffing and first-year operational requirements, The Homestead projects a need for \$1,000,000.

The Eastern Iowa children and families facing their autism challenges every day need your help to make this capital campaign successful.

It's important that every family in Iowa has access to The Homestead's expertise, compassion and incredible therapies. And that's where you can help. We want to bring the Homestead here to your community. To make that happen, we need your support. It's that simple.

We know we can make a difference and we know that you can too.

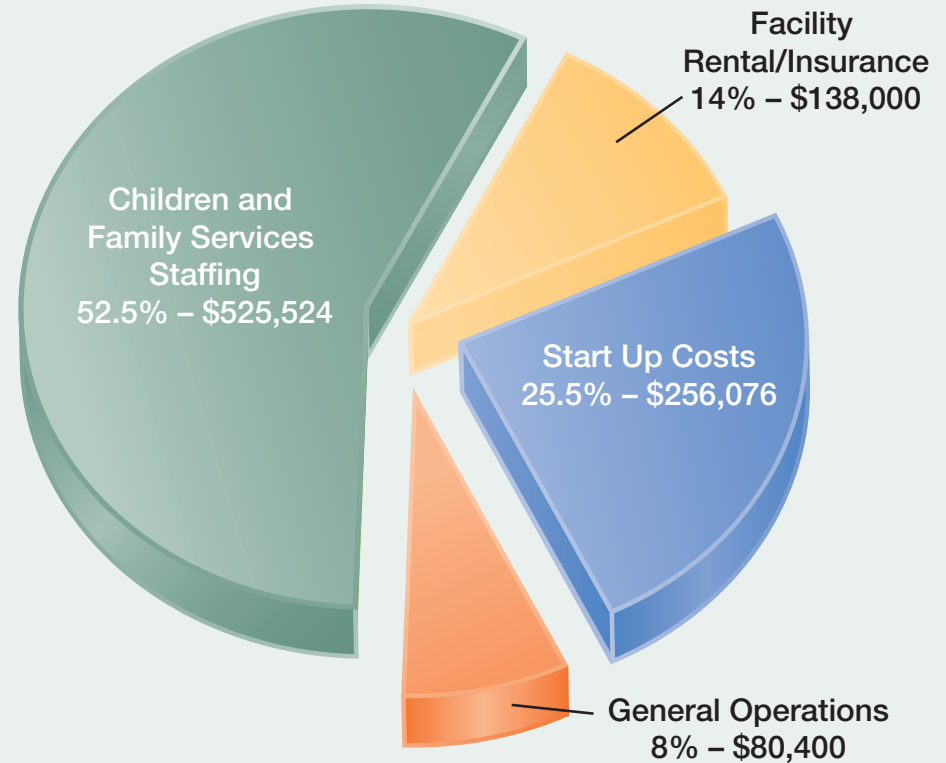
Sally Pederson, parent of Ronald who was diagnosed with autism at age 2; founding Board Member, The Homestead; former Lieutenant Governor, state of Iowa





# CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Initial and First Year Costs: \$1,000,000







# HOW CAN I HELP?

You can help in several ways:

- Continue to help educate others about the impact autism has on those whose lives it affects.
- If you represent a community contributions program (or foundation), encourage that group to assist The Homestead with a generous donation.
- If you know a family that is impacted by autism, tell them about The Homestead.

